



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUPLE SENTENCED TO 15 MONTHS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR SMUGGLING 16-YEAR-OLD ILLEGAL ALIEN

TUCSON, Ariz. – Sandra Luz Lizarraga-Espinoza, 36, and Jaime Mujica -Lopez, 37, both of Nogales, Son., Mex., were sentenced here today to 15 months in prison by U.S. District Judge Raner C. Collins. Both pleaded guilty on February 15, 2008 to Conspiracy to Transport an Illegal Alien for Profit.

Mujica-Lopez and Lizarraga-Espinoza attempted to enter the U.S. on February 5, 2008, at the DeConcini Port of Entry in Nogales, Ariz. with a 16-year-old girl. Mujica-Lopez was the driver of the vehicle and claimed that the girl was his stepdaughter and the daughter of his common law wife, Lizarraga-Espinoza. Mujica-Lopez presented laser visas for all of them. Inspectors became suspicious and referred them all to secondary inspection whereupon Mujica-Lopez admitted that the laser visa he presented for the girl did not belong to her. He also admitted that he had conspired with Lizarraga-Espinoza to smuggle the girl into the U.S. Lizarraga-Espinoza admitted that the laser visa belonged to her own daughter and not to the minor they were trying to smuggle in. Lizarraga-Espinoza claimed that she and Mujica-Lopez were to be paid \$600 for smuggling the girl into the U.S. from Mexico. The 16-year-old was interviewed and stated that she had traveled from Sinaloa, Mexico, for the purpose of being smuggled to Tucson where a friend lives and where she planned to find work. The minor was determined to be in the U.S. illegally.

The smuggled teenager was detained for about 10 days before she was released from custody and returned to Mexico. Both Mujica-Lopez and Lizarraga-Espinoza are Mexican citizens with laser visas (formerly known as border crossing cards) authorizing entry to the U.S. Both are pending removal proceedings from the U.S. as a result of this conviction.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Nogales. The prosecution was handled by Raquel Arellano, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-188-002-TUC-RCC (JCG)
RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-100(Lizarraga-Espinoza & Mujica -Lopez)

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